

Who is this leaflet for?

This leaflet is for women who are pregnant, and explains the importance of having a FREE flu vaccine to protect you from getting the influenza virus, commonly known as 'flu'.

Am I at risk?

When you are pregnant your immune system is naturally lower. This means you and your baby are at risk of serious complications from flu.

What is Flu?

Many people think having flu is like having a bad cold, but in reality flu is a nasty respiratory virus which can make you feel very unwell. For pregnant women getting flu can make your problems much worse and can lead to problems with different organs in your body. Some of these complications can be life threatening. Every year over 11,000 people in England die from complications caused by the flu virus. Many of these deaths could have been prevented by having the flu vaccination.

Why is this important for you?

A national report looking at the causes of death in pregnant women and newborn babies called the MBRRACE Report found that of all the women who died from complications of pregnancy or childbirth 1 in 11 of them died from flu. More than half of these deaths could have been prevented by a flu jab.

If you have flu while you are pregnant it could mean your baby is born prematurely or has a low birth weight, and may even lead to stillbirth or death in the first week of life.

Having the flu vaccine will not only protect you but also your unborn baby. Some of the immunity from your body will pass across the placenta and protect your baby while they are inside you and during their first few weeks of life. This is called passive immunity.

Some treatments for flu are not suitable for women who are pregnant. This can mean it takes you longer to recover from the virus.

Having flu can cause complications such as pneumonia which is a serious lung infection. You may need to spend a long time in hospital, and this could make it difficult for you to look after your new baby.

Preventing flu in the first place is the best option.

How can you protect yourself and your baby?

The most effective way to protect yourself and your baby from flu is to have a FREE Flu Vaccine.

The flu vaccination season runs from October to February, but most people get flu in December and January, so the sooner you

have the vaccination the sooner you and your baby will be protected.

It is important to have the vaccination every time you are pregnant because the virus can change, and the vaccine you had during previous pregnancies may not offer you and your baby the right protection against the virus in circulation this year.

When should I have the vaccine?

You can safely have the vaccine at any time during your pregnancy, if it falls in the flu vaccination season. Your Midwife will talk to you about having the vaccine and can answer many of the questions you may have.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Can flu be treated with antibiotics?

A. No. Flu is a virus and the only way to be really protected is with a flu vaccine.

Q. Will having the vaccine give me flu?

A. No. The vaccine contains an inactive form of the virus which cannot cause flu. Some people may have a sore arm and mild aches and pains which means the vaccine is working and should only last 48 hours.

Q. Is the vaccine safe?

A. Yes. The vaccine is known to be very safe for pregnant women and there is no evidence that it causes any harm to the unborn baby.

Where can I get a vaccine?

Having your vaccination at your GP Practice

Everybody who is eligible for a FREE Flu Vaccine can get one at their GP Practice from early October.

You may receive an invitation by letter, telephone call, text message or email or the information may be on the GP Practice website, depending on how your GP Practice communicates with their patients. If you are not sure you can check with your Midwife.

Many GP Practices will hold large flu vaccination clinics, and you may not need an appointment for these special clinics. It is best to find out dates and times by calling them or checking on the Practice website.

If you have not heard about getting a flu vaccination by early October or you find out you are pregnant after October it is really important that you call your GP Practice to arrange an appointment to have a vaccination.

Remember the earlier you have your vaccination, the better protected you will be.

Having your vaccination in a community pharmacy

It may be more convenient for you to have your FREE Flu Vaccine at a participating community pharmacy – particularly if you work full time or find it difficult to get to your GP Practice. Many community pharmacies can offer this service for patients who are eligible for a FREE Flu Vaccine. If you have the vaccination in a pharmacy they will take your details and let your GP Practice know you have had the vaccination.

If you need more information:

<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/pages/flu-jab-vaccine-pregnant>

www.nct.org.uk/pregnancy/flu-and-pregnancy

The Flu Vaccination is **FREE** and **EFFECTIVE** book your appointment today



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Flu Vaccinations and You

Flu Vaccinations and Pregnancy



What flu is

Why you are at risk

Where to get a vaccine

It's FREE because YOU need it